

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM USINT CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4061

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EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS EG IS

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN MILITARY SITUATION

1. SOURCE REPORTS THAT EGYPTIAN COMMAND BELIEVES BATTLE OF SINAI TO BE IN DECISIVE STAGE. ISRAELIS HAD DURING OCTOBER 18 THRUST EGYPTIAN LINES BACKWARD TO A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 13 KILOMETERS FROM CANAL IMMEDIATELY OPPOSITE ISMAILIA, AND CLEARLY INTENDED TO HEAD STRAIGHT FOR CANAL. SOURCE HAD NO CASUALTY OR EQUIPMENT LOSS FIGURES, BUT SAID THEY WERE VERY HIGH.
2. SOURCE ADDS THAT SMALL ISRAELI FORCE WAS ABLE TO PASS THROUGH EGYPTIAN LINES UNDETECTED DURING NIGHT OF OCTOBER 17-18 AND PLACE ABOUT 20 TANKS ACROSS CANAL IN VICINITY OF LAKE TIMSAH. EGYPTIAN COMMAND STILL DOES NOT KNOW WHERE CROSSING POINT IS. AIRCRAFT RECONNAISSANCE WAS MADE OCTOBER 18 IN CENTRAL SECTOR AND REVEALED NO BRIDGES IN AREA OTHER THAN THOSE KNOWN TO BE CONTROLLED BY EGYPTIAN FORCES. EGYPTIAN COMMAND BELIEVES ISRAELIS ARE USING MOVEABLE BRIDGING DEVICE WHICH CAN BE LAID AND REMOVED IN VERY BRIEF PERIOD OF TIME, THEREBY MAKING DETECTION VERY DIFFICULT.
3. SOURCE STATES THAT THIS SECOND ISRAELI RAIDING FORCE CONSISTS OF ABOUT 20 TANKS WHICH ARE SCATTERED IN SMALLER GROUPS ON WESTERN BANK OF CANAL WITH INSTRUCTION TO CAUSE
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AS MUCH DAMAGE AS POSSIBLE UNTIL MAIN ISRAELI THRUST TO EAST OF ISMAILIA ACHIEVES BREAKTHROUGH. THIS HAS NOT YET HAPPENED. EGYPTIANS HOPE UNITS OF SECOND ISRAELI RAIDING FORCE CAN BE ENCIRCLED AND ELIMINATED TODAY OR TOMORROW AT

LATEST, AND THAT MAJOR ISRAELI THRUST CAN BE CONTAINED.

4. SOURCE ASSERTS THAT FIRST ISRAELI RAIDING FORCE, ANNOUNCED BY MRS. MEIR OCTOBER 16, WAS IN FACT WIPED OUT AT ABU SULTAN, SOME 15-20 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF PRESENT ACTION.

5. IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, SOURCE STATED THAT 12 LIBYAN PILOTS HAVE NOW JOINED EGYPTIAN-PILOTED MIRAGE SQUADRONS AT TANTA AIRFIELD. ON OCTOBER 17 ISRAELI RAID ON TANTA KILLED 11 EGYPTIAN OFFICERS, OF WHOM TWO WERE PILOTS.

6. SOURCE ADDS THAT NORTH KOREANS ENGAGED IN AIR ACTION AGAINST IAF FOR FIRST TIME OCTOBER 17 FROM QUWESNA AIRFIELD, WHERE THEY ARE NOW BASED.

7. COMMENT: REGARDING PARA 2, WE RECALL PUBLISHED PHOTOS OF FOLDABLE BRIDGING DEVICE CARRIED ON ARMORED CHASIS, SUPPLIED BY USG TO ISRAELIS SOME YEARS AGO.
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